

Weekly Market Bulletin

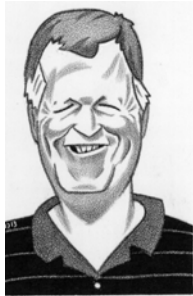
State of New Hampshire
John H. Lynch
Governor

Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
Stephen H. Taylor
Commissioner

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From Your Commissioner...

Keep Extension, Research Strong, Speakers Plead

Some 42 speakers representing a broad cross section of New Hampshire agriculture and forestry braved a howling Nor'easter last week to offer their recommendations for how the 2007 Farm Bill should be shaped.

At the top of the list was providing adequate federal support for Cooperative Extension, land grant agricultural experiment stations and research, a theme that ran through comments of a majority of the presenters. The occasion was one of a series of meetings being held in every state by high USDA officials who will draft the Bush Administration's proposal for the next Farm Bill.

Maintaining a strong land grant-Extension structure was termed critical to keeping New Hampshire producers competitive in the marketplace, and in developing the next generation of successful farmers. And it was also identified as vital to the forest industry, which relies on education and research to assure sound woodland management and a reliable supply of timber and fiber for the mills.

The state's conservation community was well-represented alongside production agriculture and forest industry people, joining the call for the Farm Bill to keep research and Extension funding adequate and supporting a variety of other concerns speakers put forward.

In no particular order, here were some of the key points presented for inclusion in the next Farm Bill:

- Continue a safety net for dairy farmers through continuation of the MILC program or something similar;
- Keep funding the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection (FRPP) program that has helped with numerous farm preservation projects in New Hampshire;
- Provide a fair share of funding for NRCS activities in the state, including EQIP, WHIP and other soil, water and other resource protection programs;
- Fund market development initiatives, such as the farmers' market coupon program and the specialty crop promotion block grants;
- Strengthen agricultural finance mechanisms;
- Shape a farm policy that provides fair returns to U.S. producers and doesn't disadvantage the Northeast to benefit agriculture in other parts of the country.

There was lots more covered in the three-hour session and many of the speakers could have used more than the allotted two minutes per person, but Undersecretary Thomas Dorr, who presided, invited anyone and everyone to submit written comments via the USDA.gov website.

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Folks in Europe are reading about New Hampshire horticulture in one of the continent's leading green industry magazines. HortiWorld in its current issue spotlights D.S. Cole Growers of Loudon and how the operation produces and markets high-end plant crops in a 3,200-word article written by Cole's chief grower, Chris Schlegel.

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The transfer of soil laboratory analysis work from UNH to Penn State has gone flawlessly, with rapid turnaround time and no increased costs.

At Taylor Farm we sent off 23 samples in September and had the printouts of the lab results in about two weeks. Like many farms in the Connecticut Valley we had good values across the board except for potassium, which showed up low for most of the fields despite plenty of K applications in recent years.

UNH Extension's Tom Buob explained what's been happening—sorry, I can't retell what he said, I nearly flunked high school chemistry—and advised just keeping on with applications according to UNH recommendations.

Farmers wanting wood ash delivered during the winter months must have current soil tests before primary hauler RMI of Holderness can accept orders.

Steve Taylor, Commissioner